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ABSTRACT

Broad areas of teacher center directors' roles and responsibilities were identified through an examination of their perceptions of job expectations, time spent on activities, and their frustrations and concerns. A survey elicited responses on six categories of job responsibilities: program development, service to teachers, administration, public relations, assessment and evaluation, and personal growth. Comparisons are made among the directors' expectations in each category, the actual amount of time spent in each, and their frustrations and problems. Administration and public relations were revealed as the most time consuming duties in their jobs, while lack of time for better services to teachers and for personal development proved to be the greatest sources of frustration. Results of the survey are demonstrated by graphs, and supplemented by observations and insights. (JD)

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LEADERSHIP IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT: PERCEPTIONS OF NEW TEACHER CENTER DIRECTORS

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Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
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WANTED! TEACHER CENTER DIRECTOR

"Newly funded Teacher Center needs director. Must show evidence of organizational experience, leadership in staff development and study beyond certification. Must have been classroom teacher. Will interrelate city/ county resources, arrange activities for teachers' professional growth, analyze needs in 17 school districts. Send resume and credentials..."

Such read the ad to which I responded nearly two years ago. I was curious and intrigued by the language, "leadership in staff development"... "activities for teachers' professional growth." What would this mean? What would I do as a teacher center director? As I accepted the job, these questions continued in my mind. My days filled with a complexity of tasks. Time for reflection was rare. I turned to my colleagues - other new teacher center directors - for support and assistance. Cognizant of my own biases, I was determined to reach out to others who shared the role to further my understanding of the responsibilities for leading a comprehensive staff development effort. This interest in the roles and responsibilities of teacher center directors culminated in this study now to be reported.

With the increase in teacher centers as forums for staff development, new leadership roles have emerged. One such role is that of director or project coordinator. Typically educators have assumed this responsibility without clear role description or definition. The literature on teacher centers makes only vague references to the qualities or characteristics of teacher center leaders and provides little documentation of activities required from those engaging in teacher center leadership. Yet description and role definition are necessary if educators taking leadership responsibilities are to be productive and feel satisfied with the nature and quality of their contributions to the teacher center experience.

The study of what happens to new teacher center directors as they assume responsibility for teacher center activities has not been undertaken previously. However, several observers of the teacher centers movement have commented about directors' roles and responsibilities.

Roy Edelfelt in a paper, "Critical Issues in Developing Teacher Centers" (1980), described the director's position as a "new position in education" requiring description and definition. He stated that the job of director must be seen and considered as it gets manifested in action situations, that typical administrative models are not appropriate for description nor are typical teacher educator or teacher models. He noted that directors seem to sense a need for identity as they look at the requirements of the job, the expectations one carries for the job and the problems the job creates. The issues Edelfelt saw need for addressing were: "How can the role of the teacher center director be described so that it

(1) is not inflexible?

(2) makes clear what a director should do?

(3) justifies a category of personnel?

(4) conveys the spirit of the kind of person wanted?

(5) helps clarify both the role of the director and the role of the policy board?" (p. 18)

In Yarger and Mertens' Content Analysis of the First Teacher Centers Program Proposals (1980) several elements were highlighted which might impact upon a director's role.

- Almost 40% of the proposals described only one full-time professional staff position, which usually carried the title of project director or teacher center director (p. 11).
- The 'typical' staffing plan included one full-time professional assisted by one full-time secretary (p. 12).
- Role descriptions provided in proposals described the following tasks as part of the director's job:
  - A. Manage administrative matters
    - (1) supervise staff (29.2%)
    - (2) act as liaison to other groups and institutions (28.5%)
    - (3) provide for dissemination (27.3%)
    - (4) preparation of budget (14.5%)
    - (5) control of grant funds
  - B. Control program development and delivery
  - C. Oversee day-to-day operations
  - D. Work with/for the Policy Board (p. 12)

In summarizing from their findings these authors recommended that improvement in the regulations guiding proposal development with respect to the role of teacher center staff would be helpful. Because the regulations did not

address teacher staffing and did not require specific descriptions of roles and responsibilities problems were forecast for proposal developers. "The likelihood of a poorly conceptualized set of role descriptions and responsibilities is high, and lack of specificity about staffing can do more to hamper the productivity of a proposed teacher center than most other factors" (p. 38).

Another position taken about teacher center directors came from Lawrence Lezotte in his paper "Teacher Centers: The New Marketplace for Teacher Educators? A Resounding Maybe!" (1979). Lezotte took the position that the function of a teacher center director was to link the teaching community with the research community. He likened the role of the director to that of an agricultural extention agent and thus specified particular abilities needed to provide leadership in both teaching and research arenas. To be effective as a linking agent, Lezotte said a person must have

- the ability to communicate effectively with both teachers and researchers,
- the capacity to see both teachers and researchers as colleagues,
- a willingness to listen to teachers,
- an ability to encourage teachers to elaborate on their problems, needs and professional role and responsibilities in a non-threatening manner,
- an ability to listen to researchers and help them to communicate research products and problems in ways meaningful to teachers, have a belief in the legitimacy in teachers' perceptions of their needs and concerns,

- and an ability to persuade teachers that research findings may be useful and have a collaborative orientation to problem solving (p. 9).

Fielding and Hersh in their monograph, "Discovering Teacher Centers: The Northwest Passage (1979), described what they viewed as trends in the development of teacher centers. In a section entitled "Finding a suitable director, coordinator or developer" the authors describe the problem as one of finding an individual who is "both a crack administrator and a respected classroom teacher" (p. 23). The responsibilities of the director are noted as

- expert at writing grants
- expert at dealing with regulations
- budgeteer
- liaison with other agencies
- communicator with diverse constituents
- assessment coordinator
- public relations agent
- program developer

In related literature on staff development, some writing has been done about the roles and responsibilities of staff developers generally. Harris (1980) suggests that both management and teaching competencies are essential for staff developers. He says that collaboration within a staff group is probably more effective in leading staff development efforts than granting any single individual such responsibility. Among those people in that group the following "array of leadership competencies" were suggested:

- Planning
- Communicating
- Conceptualizing
- Designing
- Training/Implementing
- Evaluating (p. 152)

In addition the group character must show imagination, creativity and risk-taking potential with open-mindedness and critical analytical abilities.

Tracy (1971) in his work related to industrial training programs suggest abilities related to program development ought to be part of those qualities of directors:

Directors ought to be able to

- identify training needs
- analyze job data
- select and write objectives
- construct instruments
- select content
- select training strategies
- select training aide

From these writings one would expect leaders in staff development to have both teaching and management abilities, to be planners as well as evaluators, to spend their time working with a body of diverse constituents largely engaged in providing activities related to teachers' professional growth. As individuals assumed the responsibilities of directing teacher centers their time would be taken with these tasks. Yet, the descriptions offered are speculative,

general and external to the experience of teacher centering. What is presented now is a description from directors' own perceptions of their job responsibilities.

Purpose

The purpose of this investigation was to gain a better understanding of the work of teacher center directors by focusing upon directors' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. Such understanding has come through study of task identification and time use. Specifically, four questions were investigated:

1. What are new teacher center directors' job expectations?
2. How do new teacher center directors use their time?
3. What are new teacher center directors' frustrations?
4. What are new teacher center directors' problems?

Method

To answer these questions, a questionnaire was developed and administered to a group of new teacher center directors, twenty from federally funded projects (1979 starts) and ten from projects funded through other means of support. Directors were asked to complete a series of open-ended questions designed to reflect the intentions of the research:

- What three things do you do that take most of your time?
- What are three things you feel you ought to be doing but don't have time to do?
- When you became director of your project, what three things did you expect to spend most of your time doing?
- What are your three biggest concerns or problems?

In addition, directors were asked to estimate the number of hours per week spent on a variety of tasks. A section for general comments was included. Directors were also asked to include some information about themselves, their educational background and prior experiences in related leadership activities.

Sample:

Two lists of teacher center directors were compiled for sampling purposes. The first list was 29 names of those centers funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Centers Program in 1979. The second list of 26 was compiled through the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development's Teachers' Centers Exchange and identified those teacher centers initiated in 1979 but not funded through the federal program. All directors were mailed the questionnaire, a letter of introduction and an envelope to return. Thirty responses were received; 20 from federally-funded centers and 10 from non-federal centers.

People becoming teacher center directors are a varied lot. The following categories are descriptive of the sample:

Age:	50% between 36 and 45 years of age
	33% between 25 and 35 years of age
	17% over 45
Sex:	53% females
	47% males
Years in Education:	40% between 15 and 20 years in education
	33% between 10 and 14 years in education
	4% over 20 years in education
	4% between 1 and 9 years in education
Highest Degree:	60% earned Master's Degree
	30% earned Doctorates
	10% earned Bachelor's Degree

In addition directors were asked to describe the job they held prior to assuming teacher center leadership. The job titles ranged from classroom teacher to school district superintendent. Six categories of jobs seemed appropriate for this description:

33% - Classroom or Resource Teachers
20% - Administrators
20% - College/University Faculty
20% - Federal Project Managers
7% - Teachers Association Leaders
10% - Other (Curriculum Coordinators, Staff Developers, etc.)

While these demographs will aid in the subjective interpretation of the data, because of sample size no effort was made to analyse the data by demographic characteristics.

Analysis:

A content analysis of the responses to the four open-ended questions was conducted by three independent readers familiar and experienced with content analysis procedures. Each reader was sent the response statements compiled and sorted by question and asked to pull from categories that would be description of the statements. This process was used to establish some sense of reliability for the categories and to counteract possible bias by the principle investigator. Though directors were asked to list three responses to each question, some listed more than three; others listed fewer.

The Categories:

From analysis of responses to the questions six categories emerged:

Program Development: planning, coordinating and implementing the programs of the Center; concerns about the vitality of the program; interest in influencing policy and decision-making in local school arenas with respect to inservice practice.

Service to Teachers: working directly with teachers to help them make decisions and solve problems; locating and distributing resources and materials; developing curricula; responding to individual requests; being with teachers including classroom observations and demonstrations.

Administration - Project Management: securing and allocating funds and other resources; controlling Center operations within policy guidelines; planning for the future of the Center; grant-writing; providing direction to the organization; recording activities and writing reports; compiling with regulations; hearing complaints; supervising office staff; working with internal and external politics; serving the policy board.

Communications - Public Relations: informing people about the Center; attending meetings; writing the newsletter; visiting schools; attending meetings; answering the phone; answering letters; working with the media; generating public support for the Center.

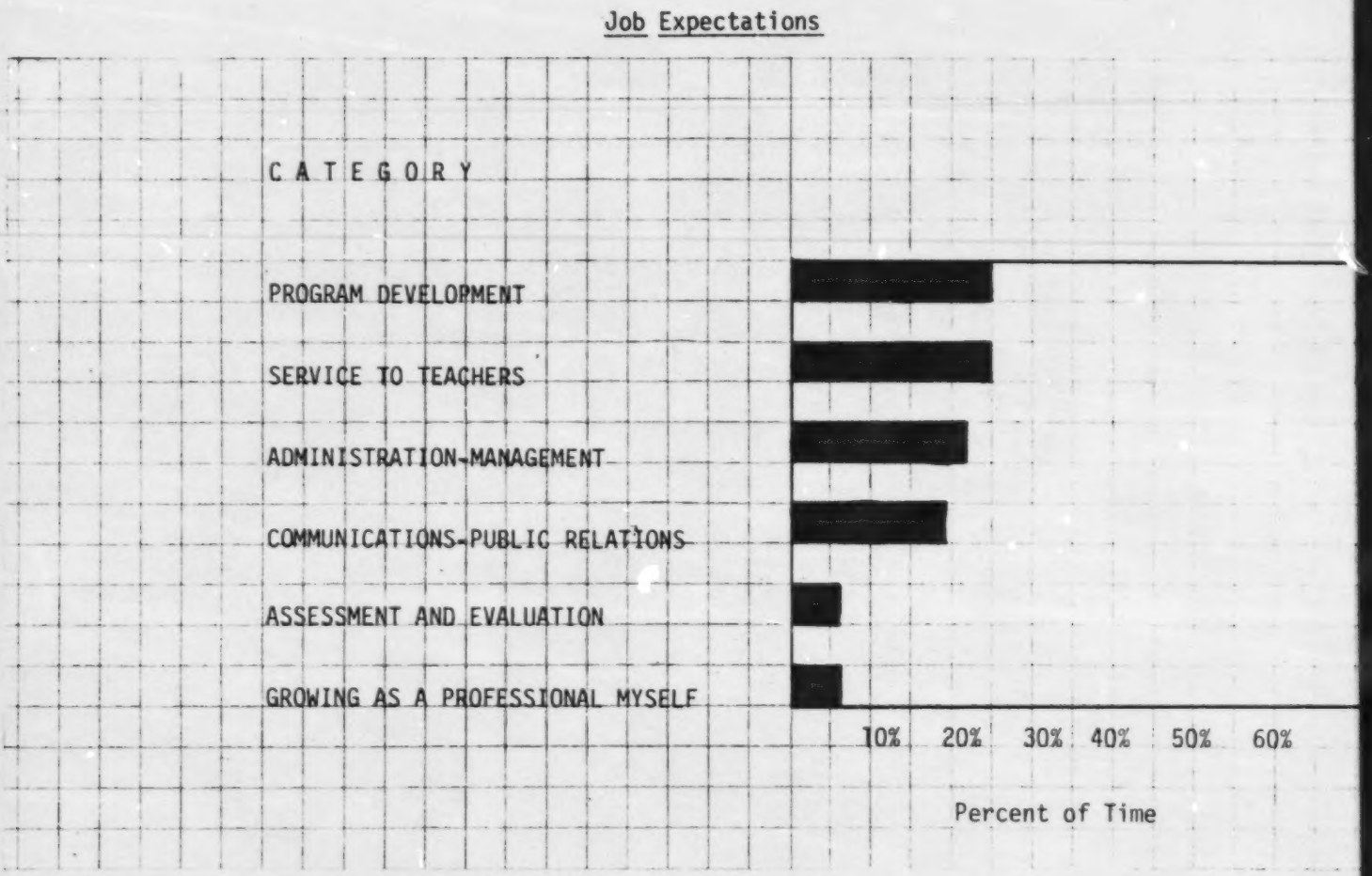
Assessment and Evaluation: finding out what people want; identifying teachers' and administrators' needs and strengths; guaging staisfaction and impact; documenting the Center's programs.

Growing as a Professional Myself: reading; visiting other teacher centers; reflecting on my own experiences; generating creative ideas; attending regional and national meetings; learning about successful practices from other staff developers.

Once these categories were established data were analyzed by question to determine the relative extent of perceived time involved.

Job Expectations:

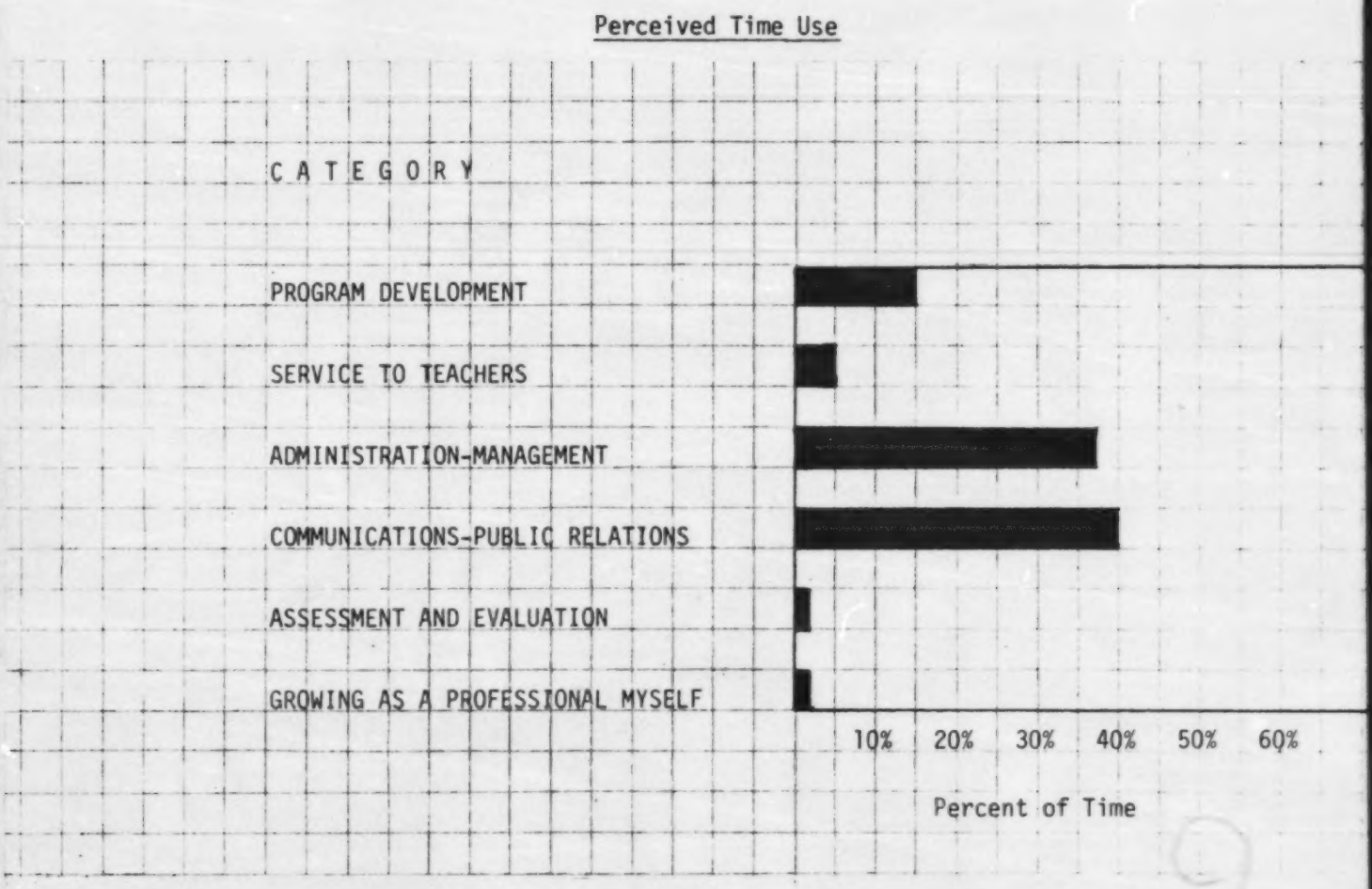
Seventy-two separate statements were recorded by directors in response to the question "What three things did you expect to spend most of your time doing?" Graph 1 indicates the distribution of expectations by the relative percentage of each category of responses to total responses.



Graph I

Time Uses:

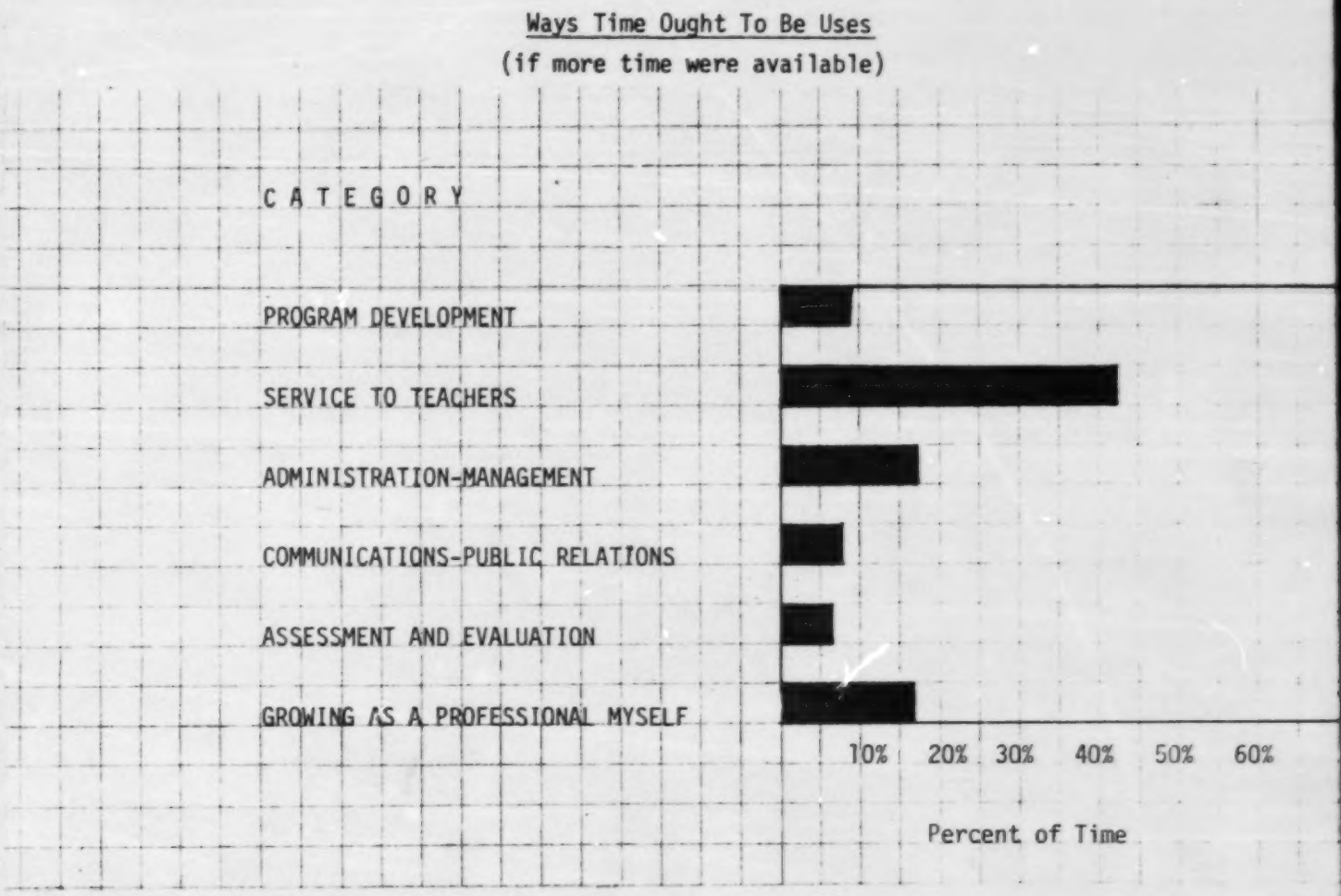
Ninty-three separate statements were recorded by directors when asked "What three things do you do that take most of your time?" Graph II indicates the distribution of perceived time uses by the relative percentages of each category of responses to total responses.



Graph II

Ways Time Ought to be Used:

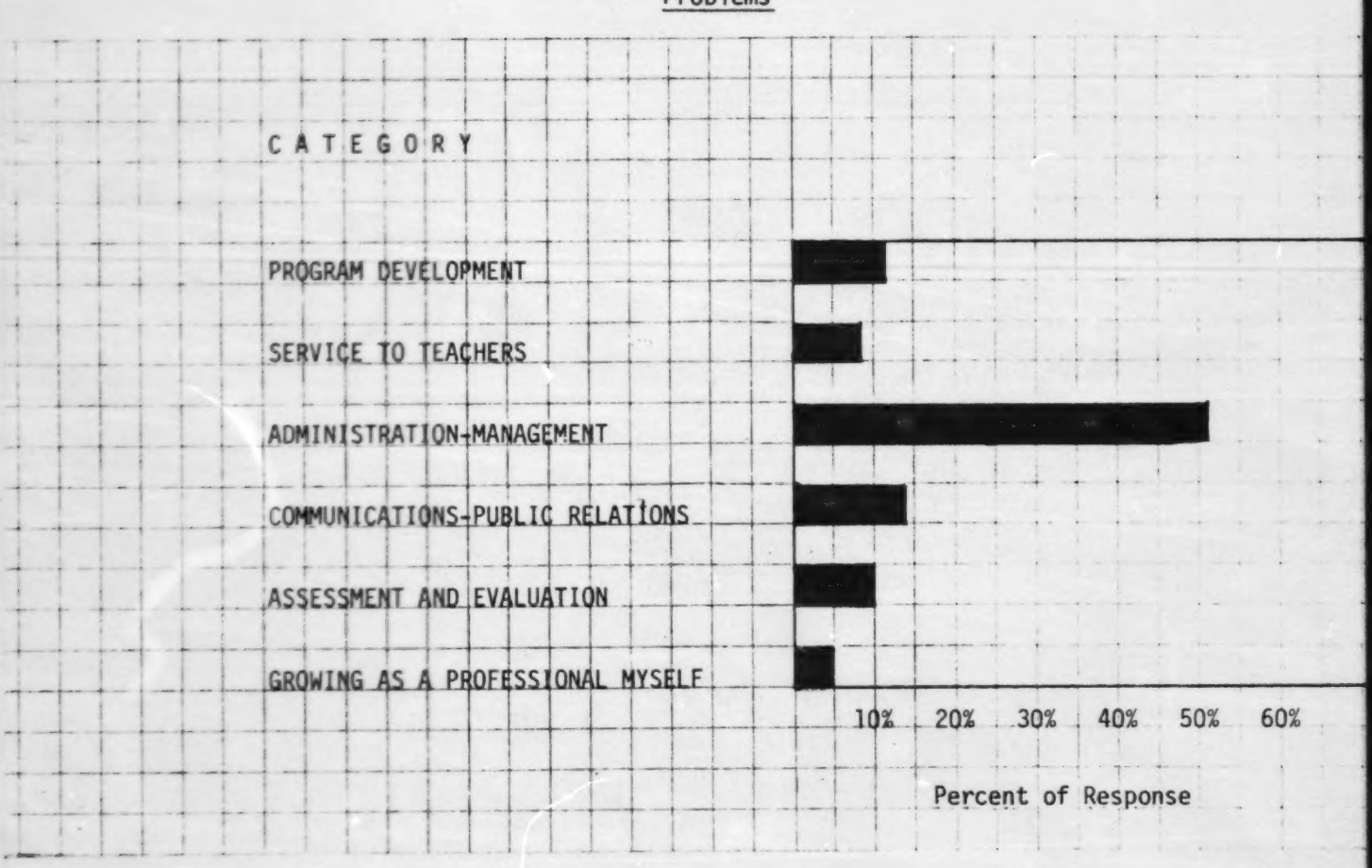
Seventy-five separate statements were recorded by directors when asked "What are three things you feel you ought to be doing but don't have the time to do?" Graph III indicates the distribution of responses by the relative percentages of each category of responses to total responses.



Graph III

Problems:

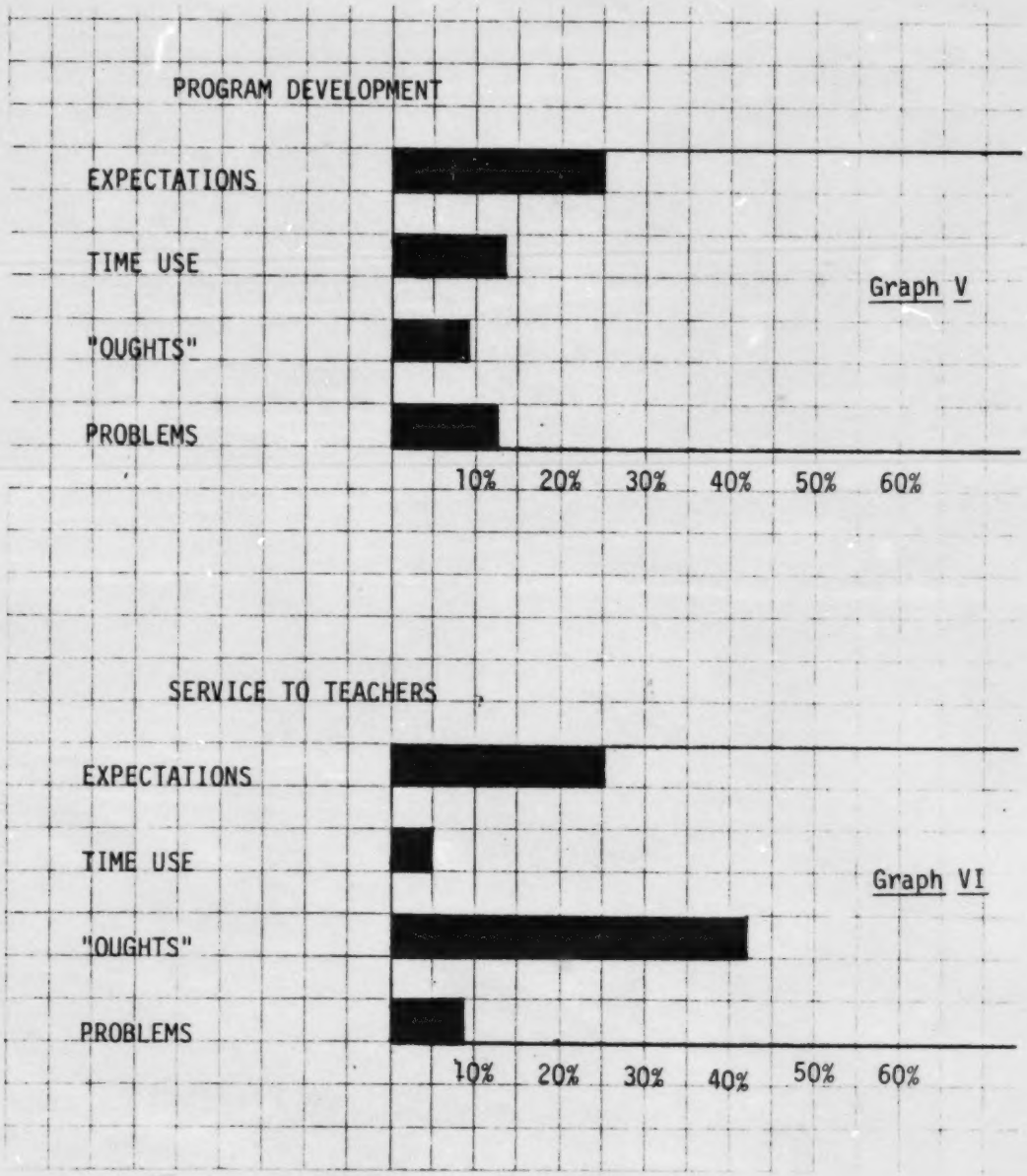
Sixty-eight separate statements were recorded by directors when asked "At this point, what are your three biggest concerns or problems?" Graph IV indicates the distribution of responses by the relative percentages of each category of responses to total responses.



Graph IV

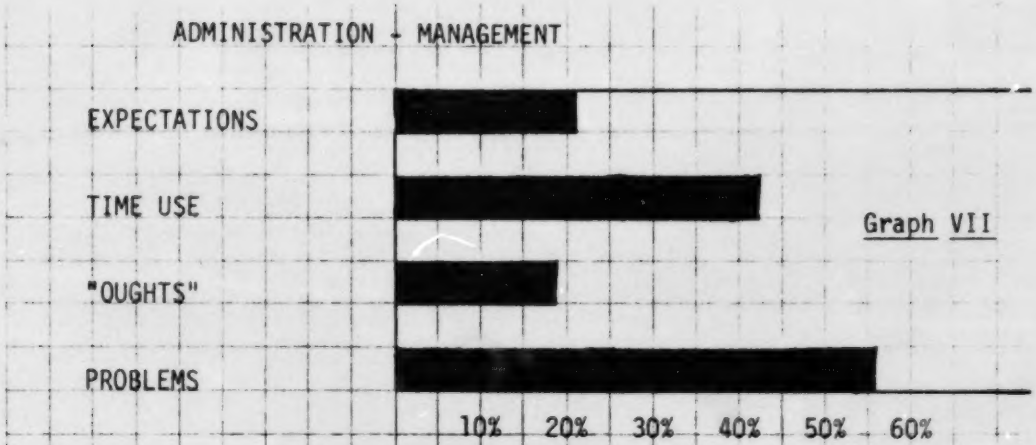
Cross-Categorical Comparisons:

To guage the perceived frustrations of teacher center directors in their jobs, a comparison by question across categories seemed in order. The following six graphs indicate the differences in directors' perceptions by category and question.

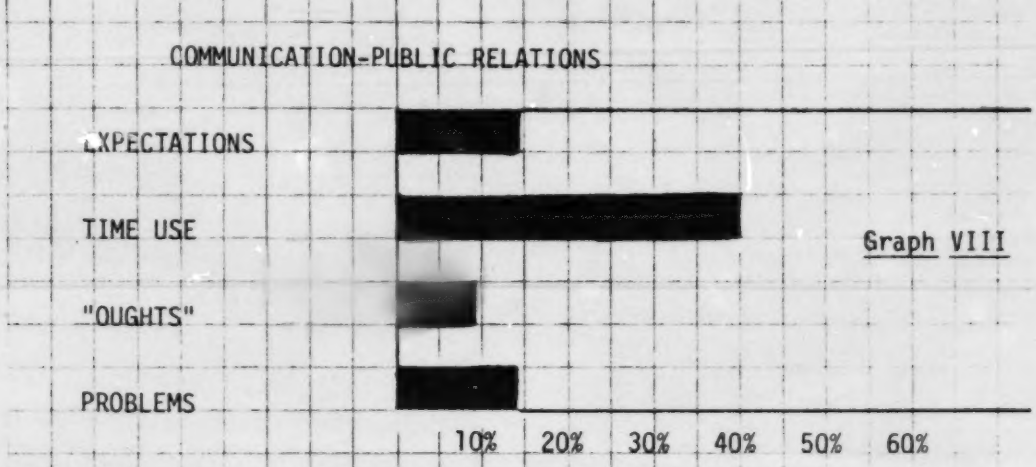


Graph V

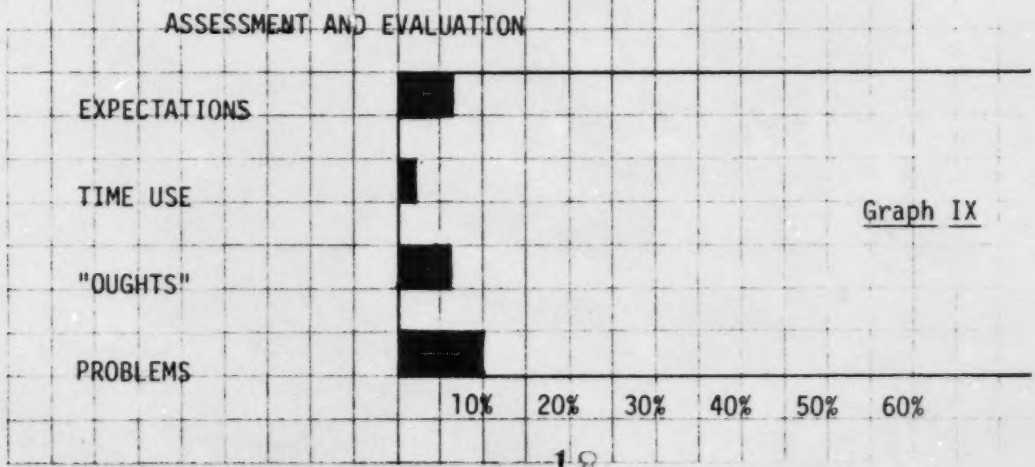
Graph VI



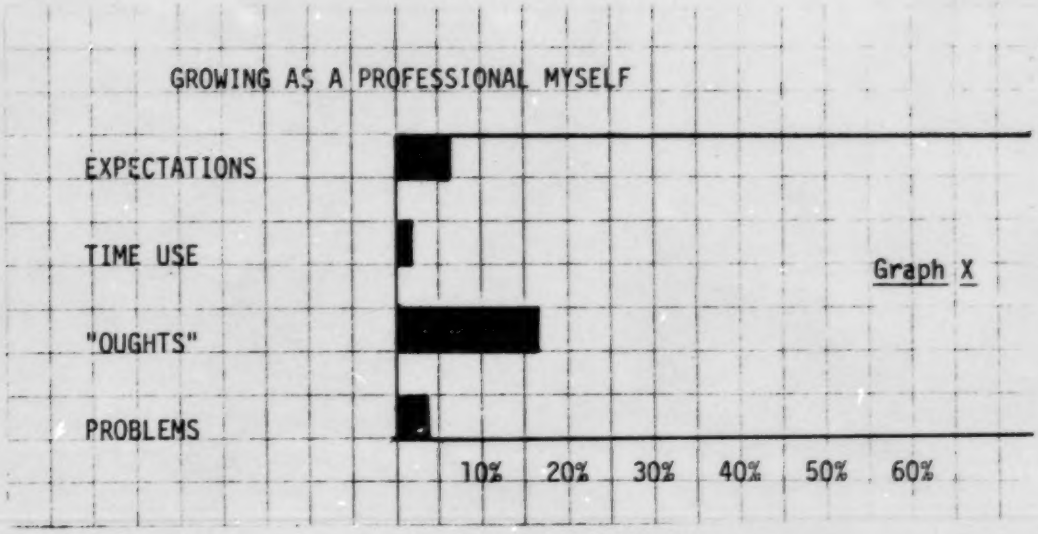
Graph VII



Graph VIII



Graph IX



Graph X

Discussion

The data display just completed could give rise to extensive discussion about the implications for preparing staff developers, particularly teacher center directors. They could also serve as a basis for discussion about differences between the imagined and the real jobs staff developers do. The following observations and insights are offered for future consideration:

- People undertaking staff development responsibilities come to their jobs with Dreams, with images for working for and with teachers, with images of creating programs which stimulate professional growth that is both useful and satisfactory. As one director wrote, "I wanted to see the forest through the trees - to be perceptive, creative and ruminative about staff development as a whole while working with teachers, listening

probing and helping them develop ideas..." Because staff developers appear idealistic, the discrepencies between expectations and time use may be predictably large in certain areas.

- These directors' expectations were different from their practices. They expressed almost a sense of surprise in their descriptions of the ways they spend their time. In statements like, "the politics of this job nearly overwhelm me" or "why do they (the policy board) expect me to be able to plan a budget? I do well to balance my own checkbook," the directors expressed awe at the decrepencies they encountered when moving from the imagined to the real.

- When looking at the ways directors actually use their time, the areas of project administration and communications are clearly the time-takers. One might wonder if this is in fact the nature of the job or if this is part of the "feet-wetting" process because the sample consisted of only new directors.

- There appears to be no relationship between the problems directors have and the amount of additional time they feel they ought to spend on related tasks. In the area of Administration and Management, for example, though directors spend nearly 40% of their time in those tasks, that is also the area where they express the greatest number of problems. While they agreed they ought to do more work in that area, the "oughts" were not proportional to the problems. That is the case in all areas.

- The greatest number of "oughts" appeared in the areas of "Service to Teachers," "Administration" and "Growing as a Professional Myself." One might wonder if "oughts" could be interpreted as "wants;" that is, what I feel I ought to be doing more are those things I want to do more.

- There may be some relationship between prior experiences and the area where problems occurred. In this sample of directors 53% came to the job from positions where few administrative skills were demanded. This may have some degree of influence on the number of problems reported in the area of Administration and Management.

- Interesting to note was that the least amount of time or concern was with the area of Assessment and Evaluation. Again, the fact that these are new directors expressing their points of view may have impacted upon the responses in this category.

- As the readers sorted comments all remarked about the variance in specificity of language use among the questions. While comments about expectations and time use were general, responses to "oughts" and problems were specific.

In summary, this study attempted to identify broad areas of teacher center directors' roles and responsibilities through an examination of directors' perceptions of their expectations, time spent on activities, frustrations and concerns. Data were described through categories created to incorporate statements from open-ended responses. Through this initial inquiry into perceptions of new leaders in a staff development effort, it is hoped that further investigations into the developmental nature of role making and taking - especially as it relates to new positions in staff development - will emerge. As one director stated, "Though I feel sometimes like the meat in the sandwich, I love every minute of my job. We feel good about our beginning and look forward to seeing the fruits of our efforts. (Sounds like I just made lunch, doesn't it?)"

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